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“DEMOCRACY CAN ONLY FLOURISH WHERE THE PRESS CAN WORK FREELY”

by

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Today, we celebrate World Press Freedom Day. Established by the United Nations, it offers us an opportunity to celebrate the essential role that press freedom plays in democracy. As President Obama said, World Press Freedom Day is “a time for us to reflect and honor all those journalists who are languishing in jail as we speak right now, are being harassed, are in danger, and, of course, journalists whose lives were lost.” Around the world, we pay tribute to journalists, who defend democratic ideals because of their commitment to discovering and sharing the truth, despite the enormous dangers they face.

Journalists play an essential role in a democracy. They hold our leaders, and us – the citizens – accountable; they provide an unvarnished portrait of our society and of ourselves; they help ensure good governance. Because of their role, journalists are often targeted by those who feel threatened. Too many have been jailed, intimidated, or even killed as they have endeavored to report on the challenges facing their communities, their countries, and our world.

Democracy can only flourish where the press can work freely. As journalists defend our democracy, we must defend them. We must protect press freedom as a fundamental human right to the benefit of citizens everywhere. The great poet and Nobel Prize winner Rabindranath Tagore dreamed of a country, “Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high; where knowledge is free.” I believe he was dreaming of a Bangladesh where writers or all types,

thinkers, and journalists could share the truth as they understand it, without fear of reprisal. We honor that vision together.

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